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Vol. 10 No. 248 Website: www.tribune.co.mp

FRIDAY 15 DECEMBER 2000

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OPA wants MHS principal probed

By ALDWIN R. FAJARDO
Staff Reporter

Public Auditor Leo L. LaMotte is asking the Public School System to immediately look into the possible involvement of Marianas High School Principal James Denight in the alleged irregularities on the purchase of supplies and services using a special trust fund.



Denight

Mr. LaMotte also urged the PSS to seriously consider the enforcement of employment sanctions against the custodian of the MHS Food Court, a locally-established food service program, for violating the ethics provi-

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President-elect Bush acknowledges applause after he addressed the nation from the Texas House of Representatives in Austin, Texas, on Wednesday, Dec. 13. (Left photo) Vice President Al Gore and running mate Joseph Lieberman, top right, thank supporters after Gore delivered a concession statement from his office in the Old Executive Office Building in Washington on Wednesday, Dec. 13.

It's Bush

■ Gore concedes; calls for nation to rally behind new president-elect

By RON FOURNIER
AP Political Writer

Five weeks after Election Day, George W. Bush at last laid claim to the presidency Wednesday night with a pledge to "seize this moment" and deliver reconciliation and unity to a nation divided. Al Gore exited the tortuously close race, exhorting the nation to put aside partisan rancor and support its new chief executive.

"I was not elected to serve one party, but to serve one nation," America's soon-to-be 43rd president told Americans in a nationally televised address from the chamber of the Texas House of Repre-

Bush presidency elates CNMI officials

By BENHUR C. SALADORES
Staff Reporter

An air of optimism and a sigh of relief permeate in the Northern Marianas as President-elect George W. Bush, a Republican, finally emerges the victor in the tight race for the White House.

Island leaders had been on the edge of their seats closely watching the outcome of the U.S. presi-

dential election for the past five weeks since it would have a far-reaching impact on CNMI's relations with the federal government.

Gov. Pedro P. Tenorio told reporters at noon yesterday that he was rushing home to watch the events unfold on live television, but declined comment when asked what he felt about the result.

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sentatives. The Texas governor chose that setting, he said, because he had been able to work there with Democrats and Republicans alike.

"Our nation must rise above a house divided," he said hopefully, echoing a reference from Scripture spoken by Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War. "Our votes may differ, but not our hopes."

His wife, Laura, beamed from the sidelines, and got her own standing ovation when Bush spoke of her future role as first lady.

Bush was preceded by Gore, who delivered his call for national unity in a televised concession.

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POWER OUTAGE ADVISORY



Saturday, December 16, 2000

Chalan Kanoa Area

8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Four to six block radius surrounding the William S. Reyes Elementary School

Minor Outage for Feeder 7

Lower Base, Tanapag to As Matule
5:30 a.m. - 6:30 a.m.

Jury finds Repeki guilty of murder

By MARIAN A. MARAYA
Staff Reporter

Jurors decided in favor of the prosecution yesterday when they found Eugene Repeki, Jr. guilty of murder in the second degree in connection with the brutal killing of a 40-year-old security guard last May 4, 1999.

Mr. Repeki, 21, is only one of three suspects facing trial for the manslaughter and aggravated assault of

Filipino worker Cesario B. Valerio. His alleged co-conspirators, Anthony Magofna and Thomas Basa, stand to undergo the same trial next year.

Defense counsel Danny Aguilar said his client was disappointed over the jury verdict and is contemplating on other legal options before his sentencing on Feb. 8, 2001.

Meanwhile, the prosecution panel triumphed over the jury's decision, stressing that all crimes committed

against people should never go unpunished.

"This kind of behavior can not be tolerated and I want to state it clear that the Attorney General's Office is going to prosecute not only these types of crimes but any type of crime to the fullest extent of the law," said government prosecutor Keith Cable.

Mr. Cable also commended Department of Public Safety case agent Mark Taisacan for facilitating the complete

investigation of Mr. Valerio's case.

"I am very pleased with the outcome. I hope this sends as a message to the community that we are not push-overs and we will do what we can to ensure that these crimes are prosecuted," the government prosecutor said.

The prosecution now leaves Mr. Repeki's fate to the Superior Court

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EXCHANGE RATES

	YESTERDAY	PREVIOUS
YEN	112.46	112.18
PESO	50.145	49.925
HK \$	7.8002	7.7996
BAHT	43.555	43.655
RUPEE	46.7685	46.765
WON	1198.00	1192.00

In U.S. dollar terms
Source: Associated Press



I don't know, Maria. Such small isles heavily strapped in provincialism! A Saina!

Teno warns against political pressures

By ALDWIN R. FAJARDO
Staff Reporter

Gov. Pedro P. Tenorio has reminded public officials against subjecting their subordinates to political pressures following a report from the Office of the Public Auditor disclosing termination of Rota local government employees who refused to support the former mayor.

In a memorandum previously issued to all government agencies, the governor warned that legal action may be taken against public officials who would consider the employees' political affiliation in the determination of his tenure.

Mr. Tenorio cited a provision in the Commonwealth Code which prohibits the promotion, demotion or termination of public officials or employees on the basis of their political or religious actions or beliefs.

The provision particularly mentioned the illegality of taking any action that may affect the security of tenure of public officials or employees who supported or did not support the candidacy of any person seeking an elective office.



Tenorio

"Furthermore, [the Commonwealth Code] specifically prohibits a person in the civil service to use official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with an election or affecting its result," Mr. Tenorio pointed out.

The CNMI chief executive issued the memorandum in the wake of OPA investigations

which revealed the involvement of former officials of the Rota Mayor's Office in the illegal termination of some employees who did not support the former mayor's reelection bid.

This prompted the Attorney General's Office to explore the possibility of filing criminal charges against former RMO officials directly involved in the use of coercive actions against their employees who did not support the former mayor's candidacy.

Attorney General Herbert Soll said his office anticipates charging the individuals involved with multiple counts of theft, bribery, political coercion, conspiracy, solicitation and misconduct in public office.

The AGO's Investigative Unit has already been instructed to review certain witness statements that are critical to the most serious charges and update their version of events since the incidents

occurred three years ago.

The OPA investigation also disclosed previous administrators of the Rota Mayor's Office misused government funds by issuing four payroll checks amounting \$2,064 to an already resigned employee.

OPA's investigation came after RMO employees, in 1996, complained that they were being subjected by some municipal officials to political pressures to

support the reelection bid of then Rota Mayor Joseph S. Inos.

The employees claimed that they were then being forced to attend the mayor's political functions if they want to continue their employment with the Rota Mayor's Office.

In 1997, OPA said it was flooded with reports that RMO employees were dismissed mainly because they refused to support the reelection of the

former Rota mayor, who told public auditor personnel that the employees served purely at his pleasure.

Moreover, after appointing 12 limited term employees in the month before the election, the RMO later attempted to use coercive action against nine of them either by comments on their refusal to support the mayor or by early termination, the OPA report said.



NEW PUBLIC SCHOOLS UNDERWAY

Two new public schools are soon to rise on Saipan after the Public School System over the last two days signalled its contractors to begin construction of two additional campuses envisioned to ease overcrowding in schools. PSS officials and legislators convened for two separate groundbreaking ceremonies at Kagman on Wednesday (above photo) and Koblerville yesterday to kick off actual construction activities at two of the school system's major Capital Improvement Projects for the year: the Koblerville Junior High and Kagman High schools.

Photos by YVONNE ATALHE

Senate, House try to reach budget deal

By BENHUR C. SALADORES
Staff Reporter

Senate and House conferees began yesterday what they expect as "marathon meetings" to hammer out a budget pact acceptable to both chambers by early next year.

They emerged "positive" and "optimistic" at the end of the first day of talks held at the Senate conference room in Capitol Hill hoping to reach later on a compromise on the FY 2001 spending package.

House Ways and Means Committee chair Rep. Antonio M. Camacho and Senate Fiscal Affairs Committee chair Edward U. Maratita are leading six lawmakers tasked to come up with a deal in the negotiating table.

They are joined by House Floor Leader Oscar M. Babauta and Rep. Malua T. Peter from the lower house, and Senate Floor Leader Pete P. Reyes and Sen. Joaquin G. Adriano.

The bicameral conference is eyeing piecemeal budget for key departments and agencies, as well as for the Legislature and the judiciary, since both houses already agreed on the appropriation level.

According to Mr. Reyes, they hope to approve the budget set aside for the Public School System, the Department of Public

Safety, the Department of Public Health, the Washington Representatives Office and several individual programs.

But they are still deadlocked on several administrative provisions of the fiscal budget, other members of the bicameral conference committee said.

Mr. Babauta said they are still laying down on the table their major differences so they can come up with an agreement at the end of the talks.

But he said the House is optimistic of coming to terms with the Senate on several issues, without giving specifics on which provisions or items they would eventually agree.

Likewise, Mr. Adriano said the Senate is hopeful of getting the House's approval on programs senators want included in the budget bill.

Both Rota and Tinian are pressing at least \$1 million for two separate offices of the Marianas Visitors Authority in each of the island municipalities.

Mr. Maratita is also firm in his proposal to earmark \$2 million to settle portion of the so-called retroactive salary owed by the government to its 2,000 employees since 1991.

On the other hand, House members have said they would lobby reinstatement of \$700,000

taken away by their counterpart to finance lobbying campaign in Washington D.C.

They are also considering an increase in the share of other vital programs, such as public health and public safety, as well as appropriation to increase pay of those employees considered under "frozen steps."

The bicameral conference followed House's rejection of the amendments made by the Senate to the budget that showed substantial changes to the proposal it crafted last August.

Estimated spending level for the current fiscal year has reached to \$221.66 million, but the upper house cut \$10 million from the Executive Branch to fund programs and projects endorsed by the senators.

Differences on how to distribute cash resources of the government have come to mark the budget process in the Legislature in the past few years, mainly due to the decline in revenues and jostling for bigger share that have made it difficult to reach a compromise.

Gov. Pedro P. Tenorio previously has said he would not step into the fray between the Senate and the House on the budget, but he is likely to reject some appropriation items once the spending measure clears both chambers.

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